

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request for continued examination (RCE) under 37 CFR § 1.114.

By this amendment, claims 1, 8, 10-15, and 21-24 have been amended and new claims 27-30 have been added to the subject application. Claims 1-30 are pending in the subject application. A marked up version of the amended claims is presented in Appendix A attached to this response to Office Action.

**Office Action Response to Applicants' Argument in the  
Amendment Filed February 3, 2003.**

In responding to Applicants' argument in the Amendment filed on February 3, 2003 and received at USPTO on February 6, 2003, the Office Action asserts, on page 2, that "selecting a vehicle from a second group in response to no suitable vehicle available in first group", "a computer programmed to determine whether additional vehicles should be relocated", and "determining fleet vehicle locations at a given time" are only simple management of resources.

The Office Action does not provide any prior art reference in supporting such assertions. In addition, a vehicle sharing system in accordance with the present invention executes a program at a central computer to define a first VSG of the first port; in response to at least one vehicle in the first VSG, allocate a vehicle therefrom to the user request; define a second VSG of a second port; in response to at least one vehicle in the second VSG, selecting

*a vehicle therefrom for allocating to the user request; and generating a relocation request of the selected vehicle from the second port to the first port. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that the relied on prior art reference and the assertion of "simple management of resources", even if assuming to be true and valid, do not make the present invention obvious.*

**Rejection of Claims 1, 8, 15, and 21 Under 35 U.S.C. § 102**

Claims 1, 8, 15, and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being clearly anticipated by Tagami et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,812,070, herein after referred to as "Tagami "). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Tagami discloses a shared vehicle rental system that registers the users in a plurality of groups depending on a usage time zone (Abstract). Specifically, Tagami discloses dividing users into user groups according to their previous vehicle use patterns.

Claim 1 calls for, among other things, a computer system programmed for defining a first VSG of the first port; in response to at least one vehicle in the first VSG, allocating a vehicle therefrom to the user request; in response to no vehicle in the first VSG, defining a second VSG of a second port; in response to at least one vehicle in the second VSG, selecting a vehicle therefrom for allocating to the user request; and generating a relocation request of the selected vehicle from the second port to the first port. At least a combination of these and the other elements specified in claim 1 is not disclosed in Tagami. Therefore, claim 1 is allowable over Tagami.

Claim 8 calls for, among other things, executing a vehicle allocation program at the central computer to perform the steps of defining a first vehicle search group (VSG) for the first port and a second VSG for a second port; allocating to the request a vehicle from the first VSG in response to a suitable vehicle present in the first VSG; allocating to the request a vehicle from the second VSG in response to no suitable vehicle present in the first VSG; and generating a command for relocating the allocated vehicle from the second port to the first port in response to allocating a vehicle from the second VSG. At least a combination of these and the other elements specified in claim 8 is not disclosed in Tagami. Therefore, claim 8 is allowable over Tagami.

Claim 15 calls for, among other things, a computer system programmed to defining a search depth VSG for each port in which one or more available vehicles from the fleet may be located at any given time for possible allocation to a user at the port, determine a number of vehicles in a first search depth VSG of a first port and, in responses thereto, to determine whether additional vehicles should be relocated to the first port. At least a combination of these and the other elements specified in claim 15 is not disclosed in Tagami. Therefore, claim 15 is allowable over Tagami.

Claim 21 calls for, among other things, executing a vehicle allocation program at the central computer to perform the steps of defining a first VSG for a first port and a second VSG for a second port; determining a number of available vehicles in the first VSG; and based on the number of available vehicles in the first VSG, determining whether additional vehicles should be relocated to the first port. At

lease a combination of these and the other elements specified in claim 21 is not disclosed in Tagami. Therefore, claim 21 is allowable over Tagami.

**Rejection of Claims 1-26 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103**

Claims 1-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Klein et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,726,885, herein after referred to as "Klein") in view of Carr (U.S. Patent No. 5,066,034, herein after referred to as "Carr") and further in view of Taft (U.S. Patent No. 5,579,973, herein after referred to as "Taft"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Klein discloses a hiring vehicle transportation system (Fig. 1) comprised of a disposition center (Z) and automatic collection and return machines (HA). Klein also discloses in column 5, lines 58-63, that the collection and return occupation function determines how many vehicles are in transit and how many vehicles are freely available or reserved at the respective collection and return point. Whenever a user makes a vehicle request, this function determines whether the desired vehicle is available at the desired location at the desired time. It is respectfully submitted that Klein neither teaches nor suggests a *computer system generating vehicle relocation command* between different automatic collection and return machines (HA) in order to satisfy user requests for vehicles.

Carr discloses a car towing apparatus with a surge brake system. Taft discloses a carrier for lightweight two wheel vehicles, with capability for also towing a trailer. It is respectfully submitted that neither Carr nor Taft teaches

or suggests anything related to computer system generated vehicle relocating requests between different vehicle ports in a vehicle sharing system. It is further respectfully submitted that, at the time of the present invention, there is no motivation of combining the towing apparatus with surge brakes of Carr and the lightweight tow vehicles of Taft with the hiring vehicle transportation system of Klein.

Claim 1 calls for, among other things, a computer system programmed for defining a first VSG of the first port; in response to at least one vehicle in the first VSG, allocating a vehicle therefrom to the user request; in response to no vehicle in the first VSG, defining a second VSG of a second port; in response to at least one vehicle in the second VSG, selecting a vehicle therefrom for allocating to the user request; and generating a relocation request of the selected vehicle from the second port to the first port. A combination of these elements and the other elements specified in claim 1 is neither taught nor suggested by Klein, Carr, and Taft, either singly or in combination. Therefore, claim 1 is allowable over Klein in view of Carr and further in view of Taft.

Claims 2-7 depend from claim 1 and are therefor allowable over Klein in view of Carr and further in view of Taft for at least the same reasons as claim 1.

Claim 3 further sets out that said computer system is further programmed for including in the first VSG vehicles due to arrive at the first port within a preset time period. Claim 7 further sets out a display device for displaying the relocation request to an attendant of the second port in response to said computer system generating a relocation

request. At least the combinations of these elements and the other elements specified in claims 3 and 7 are neither taught nor suggested by Klein, Carr, and Taft, either singly or in combination, further precluding the obviousness of claims 3 and 7.

Claim 5 further sets out that at least one vehicle in the fleet includes a carrier hitch receptacle; and said vehicle transport device comprises a carrier bracket connectable to the said carrier hitch receptacle of one vehicle, for carrying a second vehicle. Claim 6 further sets out that said carrier bracket comprises a cycle carrier bracket for carrying a cycle; and said second vehicle comprises a cycle. It is respectfully submitted that, at the time the present invention, there is no motivation of combining the towing apparatus with surge brakes of Carr and the lightweight tow vehicles of Taft with the hiring vehicle transportation system of Klein. This further precludes the obviousness of claims 5 and 7.

Claim 8 calls for, among other things, executing a vehicle allocation program at the central computer to perform the steps of defining a first vehicle search group (VSG) for the first port and a second VSG for a second port; allocating to the request a vehicle from the first VSG in response to a suitable vehicle present in the first VSG; allocating to the request a vehicle from the second VSG in response to no suitable vehicle present in the first VSG; and generating a command for relocating the allocated vehicle from the second port to the first port in response to allocating a vehicle from the second VSG. It is respectfully submitted that a combination of these elements and the other elements specified

in claim 8 is neither taught nor suggested by Klein, Carr, and Taft, either singly or in combination. Therefore, claim 8 is allowable over Klein in view of Carr and further in view of Taft.

Claims 9-14 depend from claim 8 and are therefor allowable over Klein in view of Carr and further in view of Taft for at least the same reasons as claim 8. Claim 10 further sets out including vehicles due to arrive at the first port within a preset time period in the first VSG. Claim 13 further sets out displaying a relocation message to an attendant of the second port. At least the combinations of these elements and the other elements specified in claims 10 and 13 are neither taught nor suggested by Klein, Carr, and Taft, either singly or in combination, further precluding the obviousness of claims 10 and 13.

Claim 15 calls for, a computer system programmed to defining a search depth VSG for each port in which one or more available vehicles from the fleet may be located at any given time for possible allocation to a user at the port, determine a number of vehicles in a first search depth VSG of a first port and, in responses thereto, to determine whether additional vehicles should be relocated to the first port. A combination of these elements and the other elements specified in claim 15 is neither taught nor suggested by Klein, Carr, and Taft, either singly or in combination. Therefore, claim 15 is allowable over Klein in view of Carr and further in view of Taft.

Claims 16-20 depend from claim 15 and are therefor allowable over Klein in view of Carr and further in view of Taft for at least the same reasons as claim 15. Claim 17

further sets out that the first search depth VSG further includes vehicles due to arrive at the first port within a preset time period based on the search depth. Claim 20 further sets out a port attendant display device coupled for communication with said computer system and adapted for displaying a relocation message to an attendant of the second port. At least the combinations of these elements and the other elements specified in claims 17 and 20 are neither taught nor suggested by Klein, Carr, and Taft, either singly or in combination, further precluding the obviousness of claims 17 and 20.

Claim 21 calls for, among other things, executing a vehicle allocation program at the central computer to perform the steps of defining a first VSG for a first port and a second VSG for a second port; determining a number of available vehicles in the first VSG; and based on the number of available vehicles in the first VSG, determining whether additional vehicles should be relocated to the first port. A combination of these elements and the other elements specified in claim 21 is neither taught nor suggested by Klein, Carr, and Taft, either singly or in combination. Therefore, claim 21 is allowable over Klein in view of Carr and further in view of Taft.

Claims 22-26 depend from claim 21 and are therefor allowable over Klein in view of Carr and further in view of Taft for at least the same reasons as claim 21. Claim 23 further sets out determining whether the number of vehicles within the designated area is below a preset value. Claim 24 further sets out determining whether the number of available vehicles in the first VSG is below a preset value. At least



the combinations of these elements and the other elements specified in claims 23 and 24 are neither taught nor suggested by Klein, Carr, and Taft, either singly or in combination, further precluding the obviousness of claims 23 and 24.

**New Claims 27-30**

New independent claim 27 calls for, among other things, a computer system programmed for defining a first VSG of the first port; in response to at least one vehicle in the first VSG, allocating a vehicle therefrom to the user request; in response to no vehicle in the first VSG, defining a second VSG of a second port; in response to at least one vehicle in the second VSG, selecting a vehicle therefrom for allocating to the user request; generating a relocation request of the selected vehicle from the second port to the first port; and a vehicle transport device for transporting one or more vehicles from one port to another port, wherein at least one vehicle in the fleet includes a tow hitch receptacle and said vehicle transport device comprises a tow bar for coupling to a tow hitch receptacle and connecting two vehicles together. At least a combination of these and other elements specified in claim 27 is not taught or suggested by any of the relied on references, either singly or in combination. Therefore, claim 27 is allowable over the relied on references.

Claim 28 depends from claim 27 and further sets out that said computer system is further programmed for including in the first VSG vehicles due to arrive at the first port within a preset time period. At least a combination of these elements and the other elements specified in claim 28 is neither taught nor suggested by the relied on references,

either singly or in combination, further precluding the obviousness of claim 28.

New independent claim 29 calls for, among other things, a computer system programmed for defining a first VSG of the first port; in response to at least one vehicle in the first VSG, allocating a vehicle therefrom to the user request; in response to no vehicle in the first VSG, defining a second VSG of a second port; in response to at least one vehicle in the second VSG, selecting a vehicle therefrom for allocating to the user request; generating a relocation request of the selected vehicle from the second port to the first port; and a vehicle transport device for transporting one or more vehicles from one port to another port, wherein at least one vehicle in the fleet includes a carrier hitch receptacle; and said vehicle transport device comprises a carrier bracket connectable to the said carrier hitch receptacle of one vehicle, for carrying a second vehicle. At least a combination of these and other elements specified in claim 29 is not taught or suggested by any of the relied on references, either singly or in combination. Therefore, claim 29 is allowable over the relied on references.

Claim 30 depends from claim 29 and further sets out that said carrier bracket comprises a cycle carrier bracket for carrying a cycle; and said second vehicle comprises a cycle. At least a combination of these elements and the other elements specified in claim 30 is neither taught nor suggested by the relied on references, either singly or in combination, further precluding the obviousness of claim 30.

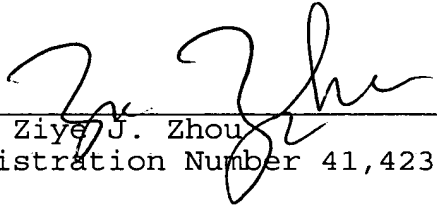
CONCLUSION

In view of above, claims 1-30 currently pending in the subject application are believed to be allowable and the subject application is in condition for allowance. Such action is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees to Manatt, Phelps & Phillips' Deposit Account No. 50-1847 or to credit any overpayment to the same for all matters during the prosecution of the subject application.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPENDIX A  
MARKED UP VERSION OF AMENDED CLAIMS

1. (Twice Amended) A vehicle sharing system for sharing a fleet of vehicles, comprising:  
a plurality of ports at geographically remote locations relative to each other;  
a plurality of user interface terminals at [each] said plurality of ports for receiving [a] requests for [a] vehicles from the fleet; and  
a computer system coupled for communication with [the] said plurality of user interface terminals [at each port] and programmed for:  
in response to a user request received at a first port, defining a first vehicle search group (VSG) of the first port;  
in response to at least one vehicle in the first VSG, [selecting] allocating a vehicle therefrom to the user request;  
in response to no vehicle in the first VSG, defining a second VSG of a second port;  
in response to at least one vehicle in the second VSG, selecting a vehicle therefrom for allocating to the user request; and  
in response to selecting a vehicle from the second VSG, generating a relocation request of the selected vehicle from the second port to the first port.

8. (Twice Amended) A method for sharing a fleet of vehicles, comprising:  
providing a plurality of interface terminals at a plurality of ports at geographically remote locations relative to each other;  
receiving a request for a vehicle from the fleet from a user at an interface terminal of a first port;  
transmitting the request to a central computer; and  
executing a vehicle allocation program at the central computer to perform:  
defining a first vehicle search group (VSG) for the first port and a second VSG for a second port;  
allocating to the request [selecting] a vehicle  
from the first VSG in response to a suitable vehicle present in the first VSG;  
allocating to the request [selecting] a vehicle  
from the second VSG in response to no suitable vehicle present in the first VSG;  
and  
generating a command for relocating the allocated  
[selected] vehicle from the second port to the first port in response to allocating  
[selecting] a vehicle from the second VSG.
10. (Twice Amended) A method as recited in claim 8, wherein the step of defining a first VSG further includes including vehicles due to arrive at the first port within a preset time period in the first VSG.

11. (Twice Amended) A method as recited in claim 8, further comprising, in response to the central command generating a command for [wherein] relocating the [selected] allocated vehicle: [comprises:] connecting [one] a first end of a tow bar to a trailer hitch of a first vehicle and a second end of the tow bar to a trailer hitch of a second vehicle; and towing the second vehicle with the first vehicle.
12. (Twice Amended) A method as recited in claim 8, further comprising, in response to the central command generating a command for [wherein] relocating the [selected] allocated vehicle: [comprises:] connecting a carrier bracket to a carrier hitch receptacle of a first vehicle; and carrying a second vehicle on the carrier bracket.
13. (Twice Amended) A method as recited in claim 8, further comprising, in response to the central command generating a command for [wherein] relocating the [selected] allocated vehicle, [further includes] displaying a relocation message to an attendant of the second port.
14. (Twice Amended) A method as recited in claim 8, wherein executing a vehicle allocation program at the central computer further [defining a second VSG] includes defining the second VSG different than the first VSG.

15. (Twice Amended) A vehicle sharing system for sharing a fleet of vehicles, comprising:
- a plurality of ports at geographically remote locations relative to each [other, each port having a search depth vehicle search group (VSG) in which one or more available vehicles from the fleet may be located at any given time for possible allocation to a user at the port] other;
  - a computer system in communication with said plurality of ports and programmed to defining a search depth vehicle search group (VSG) for each port in which one or more available vehicles from the fleet may be located at any given time for possible allocation to a user at the port, determine a number of vehicles in a first search depth VSG of a first port and, in responses thereto, to determine whether additional vehicles should be relocated to the first port; and
  - means for relocating one or more vehicles from a second port to the first port, upon a determination by said computer system that additional vehicles should be relocated to the first port.

21. (Twice Amended) A method for sharing a fleet of vehicles among one or more users, comprising:  
providing a plurality of ports at geographically remote locations relative to each other;  
providing a central computer in communication with the plurality of ports;  
executing a vehicle allocation program at the central computer to perform:  
defining a first vehicle search group (VSG) for a first port, in which one or more vehicles from the fleet may be located at any given time, and a second VSG for a second port, in which one or more vehicles from the fleet may be located at any given time;  
determining a number of available vehicles in the first VSG; [of and,] and  
based on the number of available vehicles in the first VSG, determining whether additional vehicles should be relocated to the first port; and  
relocating one or more vehicles from the second port to the first port, upon a determination by the central computer that additional vehicles should be relocated to the first port.



22. (Twice Amended) A method as recited in claim 21, wherein executing [determining] a vehicle allocation program at [number of available vehicles in] the central computer further [first VSG] comprises:  
detecting a location of each vehicle in the fleet;  
transmitting the location of each vehicle to the central computer; and  
determining a number of vehicles within a designated area with respect to the first port.
23. (Twice Amended) A method as recited in claim 22, wherein executing a vehicle allocation program at the central computer further [determining whether additional vehicles should be relocated] comprises determining whether the number of vehicles within the designated area is below a preset value.
24. (Twice Amended) A method as recited in claim 21, wherein executing a vehicle allocation program at the central computer further [determining whether additional vehicles should be relocated] comprises determining whether the number of available vehicles in the first VSG is below a preset value.